



New documents on political and social issues

November 2009

ACHIEVING GRADUATION FOR ALL: A GOVERNOR'S GUIDE TO DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

National Governors Association, October 22, 2009

<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0910ACHIEVINGGRADUATION.PDF>

The report addresses the alarming rate at which students in the United States drop out of high school. The report identifies the root causes of the high school dropout problem and offers a comprehensive action plan for states to curb dropouts, help youth succeed and strengthen state economies. Currently, one in five students drop out of high school, and dropouts cost the United States more than \$300 billion each year in lost wages and increased public sector expenses.

AMERICA'S CHILDREN: KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS OF WELL-BEING, 2009

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, October 28, 2009

http://www.childstats.gov/pdf/ac2009/ac_09.pdf

The report is a compendium of indicators illustrating both the promises and the difficulties confronting young people. It presents 40 key indicators on important aspects of children's lives. These indicators are drawn from our most reliable statistics, easily understood by broad audiences, objectively based on substantial research, balanced so that no single area of children's lives dominates the report, measured regularly so that they can be updated to show trends over time, and representative of large segments of the population rather than one particular group.

THE BINATIONAL OPTION: MEETING THE INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

Migration Policy Institute, November 2009

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/TeacherExchange-Nov09.pdf>

With 1 in 10 children in U.S. schools having limited English proficiency, school districts across the country face challenges in meeting the students' educational needs and finding enough qualified bilingual and English as a Second Language educators. The report identifies international teacher exchanges as an innovative strategy for school

administrators to respond to immediate teaching needs, particularly in subject areas where knowledge of a foreign language is necessary.

CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS: IMMIGRATION TRENDS

Urban Institute, October 26, 2009

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/901292_immigrationtrends.pdf

The current fact sheet examines immigration trends and finds that children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the nation's children population – while the number of children of natives increased by 2.1 million between 1990 and 2007, children of immigrants grew by 8.1 million accounting for 77 percent of the growth of the U.S. children population during this time.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT HITS ALL-TIME HIGH, FUELED BY COMMUNITY COLLEGE SURGE

Pew Research Center, October 29, 2009

<http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/college-enrollment.pdf>

The share of 18- to 24-year-olds attending college in the United States hit an all-time high in October 2008, driven by a recession-era surge in enrollments at community colleges, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of newly released data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Just under 11.5 million students, or 39.6% of all young adults ages 18 to 24, were enrolled in either a two- or four-year college in October 2008, the most recent date for which comprehensive nationwide data are available. Both figures, the absolute number as well as the share, are at their highest level ever.

THE COMPREHENSIVE CONGRESSIONAL HEALTH REFORM BILLS OF 2009: A LOOK AT HEALTH INSURANCE, DELIVERY SYSTEM, AND FINANCING PROVISIONS

The Commonwealth Fund, October 2009

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/~media/Files/Publications/Fund%20Report/2009/Oct/Congressional%20Bills/1333_Collins_comprehensive_congressional_hlt_reform_bills_2009_v2.pdf

The report provides an overview of key provisions of the two separate comprehensive health reform bills passed by the five committees of jurisdiction in the U.S. Congress. While the general frameworks of the bills are very similar, they differ in a few key respects. Most important, the Senate Finance Committee bill does not include a public plan option or a requirement that employers offer coverage, nor does it reform for more than one year Medicare's formula for setting physician fees; the House bill includes all of these features.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE REFORM: 111TH CONGRESS PROPOSALS AND OTHER CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Congressional Research Service, November 4, 2009

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40895.pdf>

American voters elect the President and Vice President indirectly, through presidential electors. Established by Article II, Section 1, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution, this

electoral college system has evolved continuously since the first presidential elections. Despite a number of close contests, the electoral college system has selected the candidate with the most popular votes in 48 of 52 presidential elections since the current voting system was established by the 12th Amendment in time for the 1804 contest. In three cases, however, candidates were elected who won fewer popular votes than their opponents, and in a fourth, four candidates split the popular and electoral vote, leading to selection of the President by the House of Representatives. These controversial elections have occurred because the system requires a majority of electoral, not popular, votes to win the presidency. This feature, which is original to the U.S. Constitution, has been the object of persistent criticism and numerous reform plans.

EMPIRE STATE EXODUS: THE MASS MIGRATION OF NEW YORKERS TO OTHER STATES

Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, October 27, 2009

<http://www.empirecenter.org/Documents/PDF/RBTemptResearch-Bulletin-Migration-2009-3.pdf>

The Empire State is being drained of an invaluable resource, the people. From 2000 to 2008, in both absolute and relative terms, New York experienced the nation's largest loss of residents to other states, a net domestic migration outflow of over 1.5 million, or 8 percent of its population at the start of the decade.

FACT SHEET: THE RACE TO THE TOP

The White House, November 4, 2009

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-race-top>

President Obama recently presented states with an unprecedented challenge and the opportunity to compete in a "Race to the Top" designed to spur systemic reform and embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning in America's schools. Backed by a historic \$4.35 billion investment, the reforms contained in the Race to the Top will help prepare America's students to graduate ready for college and career, and enable them to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PRESS: EXCEPTIONS TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Congressional Research Service, October 16, 2009

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/95-815.pdf>

This report provides an overview of the major exceptions to the First Amendment—of the ways that the Supreme Court has interpreted the guarantee of freedom of speech and press to provide no protection or only limited protection for some types of speech. For example, the Court has decided that the First Amendment provides no protection to obscenity, child pornography, or speech that constitutes "advocacy of the use of force or of law violation ... where such advocacy is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action."

The Court has also decided that the First Amendment provides less than full protection to commercial speech, defamation (libel and slander), speech that may be harmful to children, speech broadcast on radio and television, and public employees' speech.

GETTING GOOD JOBS TO AMERICA'S PEOPLE OF COLOR

Economic Policy Institute, November 12, 2009

http://epi.3cdn.net/ab1272dc3f134dbb29_7pm6bhl8g.pdf

The lack of good jobs that pay decent wages and provide health care and retirement benefits is a serious problem for all Americans and an especially dire problem for America's people of color. The author examines the rate of employment in so-called "good jobs" for different demographic groups.

IMMIGRATION, WAGES, AND COMPOSITIONAL AMENITIES

National Bureau of Economic Research, November 16, 2009

<http://papers.nber.org/papers/w15521.pdf>

Economists are often puzzled by the stronger public opposition to immigration than trade, since the two policies have similar effects on wages. Unlike trade, however, immigration can alter the composition of the local population, imposing potential externalities on natives. The paper presents a new method for quantifying the relative importance of these amenities in shaping attitudes toward immigration.

LEADERS AND LAGGARDS: A STATE-BY-STATE REPORT CARD ON EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Center for American Progress, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and American Enterprise Institute, November 9, 2009

<http://www.aei.org/docLib/Leaders%20and%20Laggards%20Report.pdf>

According to the report, the authors find much to applaud when grading the states on school performance. However, they also feel that the education system needs to be reinvented. After decades of political inaction and ineffective reforms, our schools consistently produce students unready for the rigors of the modern workplace. The report finds the lack of preparedness is staggering.

POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES: 2008

Congressional Research Service, October 6, 2009

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/132255.pdf>

In 2008, 39.8 million people were counted as poor in the United States—an increase of 2.6 million persons from 2007, and nearly the largest number of persons counted as poor since 1960. The poverty rate, or percent of the population considered poor under the official definition, was reported at 13.2%; up from 12.5% in 2007, and the highest rate since 1997. The recent increase in poverty reflects the worsened economic conditions since the onset of the economic recession in December 2007. Many expect poverty to rise further next year, and it will likely remain comparatively high even after the economy begins to recover. The incidence of poverty varies widely across the population according to age, education, labor force attachment, family living arrangements, and area of residence, among other factors. Under the official poverty definition, an average family of four was considered poor in 2008 if its pre-tax cash income for the year was below \$22,025. This report will be updated on an annual basis, following release of U.S. Census Bureau annual income and poverty estimates.

RENEWING THE AMERICAN DREAM: A ROAD MAP TO ENHANCING ECONOMIC MOBILITY IN AMERICA

Economic Mobility Project, Pew Charitable Trusts, November 6, 2009

http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Economic_Mobility/EMP_Road_Map.pdf

The report, based on three years of research from Pew's Economic Mobility Project, lays out a road map of more than 25 policy ideas and practical recommendations aimed at enhancing economic mobility in America.

THE SHRIVER REPORT: A WOMAN'S NATION CHANGES EVERYTHING

Center for American Progress, October 16, 2009

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/10/pdf/awn/a_womans_nation.pdf

This report describes how a woman's nation changes everything about how we live and work today. Now for the first time in our nation's history, women are half of all U.S. workers and mothers are the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of American families. This is a dramatic shift from just a generation ago (in 1967 women made up only one-third of all workers). It changes how women spend their days and has a ripple effect that reverberates throughout our nation. It fundamentally changes how we all work and live, not just women but also their families, their co-workers, their bosses, their faith institutions, and their communities.

SMART ON CRIME: RECONSIDERING THE DEATH PENALTY IN A TIME OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

The Death Penalty Information Center, October 2009

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/CostsRptFinal.pdf>

"Smart on Crime" is a new report from the Death Penalty Information Center that explores the prospect of saving states hundreds of millions of dollars by ending the death penalty. The report also serves to release a national poll of police chiefs in which they rank the death penalty at the bottom of their priorities for achieving a safer society.

TEACHING FOR A LIVING: HOW TEACHERS SEE THE PROFESSION TODAY

Public Agenda, October 19, 2009

<http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/teaching-for-a-living>

Everyone agrees that you can't have good education without good teachers, but how do teachers see their profession? Why do people become teachers, what are their frustrations, and what reforms do they think would improve their work?

All previous web alerts can be found at:
<http://france.usembassy.gov/web-alert.html>